Atrial Fibrillation and Stroke

That new symptom is troubling the inexplicable swelling in your calf or the blood in your urine. Could it be serious or even life threatening? Fortunately, many symptoms turn out not to be serious. For example the majority of headaches stem from stress, eyestrain, lack of sleep, dehydration, caffeine withdrawal, and other mundane causes. But a sudden, agonizing “thunderclap”, headache- the word of your life – could mean bleeding in the brain. Being able to recognize this serious symptom and calling 911 may save your life.

Here are six important signals:

1. Paralysis of the arm or legs, tingling, numbness, confusion, dizziness, double vision, slurred speech, trouble finding words, or weakness, especially on one side of the face or body.
   These are signs of stroke, in which arteries that supply oxygen to the brain become backed or nurture causing brain tissue to die. Symptoms depend on which area of the brain is involved. If a large blood vessel is blocked, a wide area may be affected, so a person may have paralysis on one side of the body and lose functions, such as speech and understanding if a smaller vessel is blocked, paralysis may remain limited to an arm or leg, or even the face. If you have symptoms, call 911 right away and get to an emergency room that offers clot-busting therapy for strokes due to blocked vessels. Such treatment, which dissolves clots in blocked vessels, needs to be given within the first 3 hours after symptoms begin, but newer treatments may work within a longer time frame. Timing is urgent; fast treatment can potentially stop brain tissue death before permanent brain injury happens.

2. Chest pain or discomfort; pain in the arm, jaw, or neck; breaking out in a cold sweat; extreme weakness; nausea; vomiting; feeling faint; or being short of breath.
   These are signs of heart attack. If you get some of these symptoms, call 911 immediately and go to the emergency room by ambulance. It is also recommended that patients chew one regular, full-strength aspirin to help prevent damage to the heart muscle during a heart attack. Some people, especially women, the elderly, and people with diabetes, get "painless" heart attacks, the doctors say. Being aware of "painless" heart attack signs is crucial: symptoms may include weakness, sudden dizziness, and pounding heart, shortness of breath, heavy sweating, a feeling of impending doom, nausea and vomiting.

3. Tenderness and pain in the back of your lower leg, chest pain, shortness of breath, or coughing up blood.
   These are symptoms of a potentially dangerous blood clot in your leg, especially if they come after you've been sitting for a long time. Blood is more likely to pool in your legs when you're sitting or lying down for long periods of time, as opposed to standing and walking. If a blood clot forms in your leg as a result, your calf can feel swollen, painful, and tender to the touch. If you get sudden chest pain or shortness of breath, a piece of the blood clot may have broken off and traveled through the bloodstream to your lungs. This condition can be life-threatening, so get to an emergency room without delay if you have any of these symptoms.

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As a result, a person's oxygen level drops while blood levels of carbon dioxide rise. A carbon dioxide buildup in the blood has a sedating effect on the brain, which may cause you to feel even drowsier. You may lose the motivation or energy to breathe.

6. Depression and suicidal thoughts.
Few people would put up with crushing chest pain or extreme shortness of breath, but many endure depression, even though, at its extreme, it can be life-threatening.
Depression can be a very, very serious problem because people can commit suicide. Some people will not seek care when they are depressed because they think that they'll be perceived as being crazy or not strong or not manly, and they have to understand that there is a chemical imbalance going on in their brain. It is a disease just like any other disease.
Symptoms of depression include sadness, fatigue, apathy, anxiety, changes in sleep habits, and loss of appetite. Depression can be treated with medications and psychotherapy.
If you have suicidal thoughts, you can speak to someone right away by calling national phone numbers such as 800-273-TALK or 800-SUICIDE.

Speak Up When You Think Something Is Wrong

Source: http://www.webmd.com

Atrial Fibrillation and Stroke (cont.)

Anytime you see blood in your urine, call your doctor promptly, even if you have no pain. Kidney stones or a bladder or prostate infection are common causes of blood in the urine. But these problems are usually painful or uncomfortable, which sends people to the doctor promptly. In contrast, when people see blood in their urine but feel no pain, some take a "wait and see" approach, especially if they just have one episode. Lack of pain doesn't necessarily mean lack of seriousness. Cancer of the kidney, ureter, bladder, or prostate can cause bleeding into the urinary tract; when these cancers are small enough to be curable, they may not cause pain. So don't dismiss this important sign blood in the urine may be the only clue for an early diagnosis.

5. Asthma symptoms that don't improve or get worse.
Asthma attacks are marked by wheezing or difficulty breathing. When an attack doesn't improve or worsens, a patient should get emergency care.
If an asthma attack is left untreated, it can lead to severe chest muscle fatigue and death. Some people with persistent asthma hesitate to go to the emergency room because they've gone so many times before, or they need someone to drive them because they're too short of breath. So instead of seeking care, they try to hang in there even if they need higher doses of inhalants or have decreasing lung function measurements when using a device to measure how well they move air out of their lungs.
Because asthma makes breathing difficult, the muscles for breathing may tire and the volume of air exchanged by the lungs will decrease.
Income Might Influence Risk for Certain Cancers

Some cancers in the United States are tied to poverty, while others common among the wealthy, researchers report. In the poorest areas of the country, the incidence of cancer is generally lower than in richer’s regions, but deaths from cancer are higher, the study authors said.

“Socioeconomic status is not something that appears on a medical record, so it is not really part of national cancer statistics and this has skewed our thinking about cancer risk,” said a study co-author.

Greater access to screening among the rich, and risky behaviors more common among the poor—such as smoking—help explain the disparities, experts said.

Kaposi sarcoma (a skin cancer among AIDS patients) and cancers of the larynx, cervix. Penis and liver occur often in the poorest neighborhoods, the investigators found. Poorer areas also had higher rates of cancers related to drinking, smoking and using injectable drugs. These are considered modifiable risk factors for cancer.

Since smoking rates are higher in poor areas, so is the incidence of smoking-related cancers. Cancers tied to sexually transmitted disease and poor diets were also more likely in the poorest neighborhoods. In the wealthiest areas, thyroid and testicular cancer, melanoma and other skin cancers were more common according to the report, published online May 27, in Cancer.

For their study, the researchers used the property rate of the patients’ neighborhoods—based on U.S. Census information as a measure of socioeconomic status in 16 states and Los Angeles County.

Although the researchers found scant association between poverty and cancers in general, for 32 to 39 cancer there was a significant link with economic status. Fourteen cancers were common in poor areas and 18 were less common.

Rates of cancers associated with over diagnosis—that is, cancers detected due to use of medical technology that would not have been identified otherwise—tend to increase with increased affluence.

Conversely, cancers common in poor areas are often the result of lack of access to cancer screening.

Another example is Kaposi sarcoma. Kaposi sarcoma is an HIV-related sarcoma, and HIV patients are likely to be poorer.

Diagnoses of breast and prostate cancer are more common in richer areas because of greater access to screening such as mammography.

Screening identifies these cancers early when they can be treated. This helps explain why poor people are more often diagnosed with advanced cancer and are more likely to die from these cancers.

These disparities can be reduced only by targeting poor neighborhoods with messages about living a healthy lifestyle. This means stressing the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, maintaining a normal weight and not smoking, he said.

Source: http://www.webmd.com
Natural back pain remedies

Achy back? You're not alone: back problems send more Americans to the doctor annually than nearly any other medical problem. Whether you're recovering from misjudging a heavy load, dealing with a lingering injury, or have a chronic problem, you don't necessary need to resort to popping tons of pain killers.

Yoga
In a British study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, low back pain sufferers who took one yoga class a week for three months saw a greater improvement in function compared to those received conventional care like medicine or physical therapy.

Stretching
The same study found that stretching is just as effective as yoga in treating back pain. The 52-minute stretching classes consisted of 15 exercises that stretched all major muscle groups, but emphasized the trunk and legs.

Massage
Two words: Treat yourself. Chronic low back pain sufferers who got weekly massages reported less pain after 10 weeks than those who didn’t, according to another Annals of Internal Medicine study.

Acupuncture
If the idea of having needles inserted into your skin gives you the heebie-jeebies, try to have an open mind—it may be the key to relieving your chronic back pain. People who received acupuncture treatments were more likely to find back pain relief than those receiving conventional care.

Talk therapy
Talking about your back pain with a therapist may bring some relief. In a U.K. study, back pain sufferers who had 90 minutes of group cognitive behavioral therapy a week for six weeks reported less pain during the treatment. (Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on solving problems by changing thoughts and behavior.) A year later, 59% said their pain was totally cured, compared to just 31% in the group that did not go through therapy.

Strength training
"Stand with your back to a wall, shoulder blades pressed against it. Can you hold the position for the length of the song 'Happy Birthday'? If not, you'll need to strengthen your back and core." Building strength in those areas can help prevent and relieve back pain.

Physical therapy
Good things come to those who wait—except perhaps when it comes to back pain treatment. Starting physical therapy within two weeks of back pain onset was associated with less risk of need for subsequent medical care as well as lower overall health costs, according to a study published in the journal Spine.

Osteopathic manual therapy
In osteopathic manual therapy (OMT), an osteopath or chiropractor moves your back muscles using hands-on techniques such as stretching, light pressure, and resistance. One study found that people who underwent OMT for 12 weeks saw a 30% reduction in their pain level.

Source: http://www.cnn.com